

Rachel Jackson
Content Outline

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vegetable_Lamb_of_Tartary

I think that the webpage can have a homepage with several tabs linking to different pages or otherwise have viewers navigate through the different pages by clicking (like what we did with our postcards)

Summary:

The **Vegetable Lamb of Tartary** (Latin: *Agnus scythicus* or *Planta Tartarica Barometz*^[1]) is a legendary zoophyte of Central Asia, once believed to grow sheep as its fruit.^[2] The sheep were connected to the plant by an umbilical cord and grazed the land around the plant. When all accessible foliage was gone, both the plant and sheep died.

Underlying the myth is a real plant, *Cibotium barometz*, a fern of the genus *Cibotium*.^[2] It was known under various other names including the Scythian lamb, the borometz, barometz and borametz, the latter three being different spellings of the local word for lamb.^[3] The "lamb" is produced by removing the leaves from a short length of the fern's woolly rhizome. When the rhizome is inverted, it fancifully resembles a woolly lamb with the legs being formed by the severed petiole bases.^[2]

Characteristics

In his book, *The Vegetable Lamb of Tartary* (1887), Henry Lee describes the legendary lamb as believed to be both a true animal and a living plant. However, he states that some writers believed the lamb to be the fruit of a plant, sprouting forward from melon-like seeds. Others, however, believed the lamb to be a living member of the plant that, once separated from it, would perish. The vegetable lamb was believed to have blood, bones, and flesh like that of a normal lamb. It was connected to the earth by a stem, similar to an umbilical cord, that propped the lamb up above ground. The cord could flex downward, allowing the lamb to feed on the grass and plants surrounding it. Once the plants within reach were eaten, the lamb died. It could be eaten, once dead, and its blood supposedly tasted sweet like honey. Its wool was said to be used by the native people of its homeland to make head coverings and other articles of clothing. The only carnivorous animals attracted to the lamb-plant (other than humans) were wolves.^[4]

Possible Origins

There is mention of a similar plant-animal in Jewish folklore as early as AD 436. This creature, called the Yeduah (ידעוּה, ידעוּי, or אֲדֻנִי הַשְּׂדֵה), was like a lamb in form and sprouted from the earth connected to a stem. Those who went hunting the Yeduah could only harvest the creature by severing it from its stem with arrows or darts. Once the animal was severed, it died and its bones could be used in divination and prophetic ceremonies.^[5]

An alternative version of the legend tells of the "Faduah", a human-shaped plant-animal connected to the earth from a stem attached to its navel. The Faduah was believed to be aggressive, though, grabbing and killing any creature that wandered too close. Like the Barometz, it too died once severed from its stem.^[6]

The Minorite Friar [Odoric of Pordenone](#), upon recalling first hearing of the vegetable lamb, told of trees on the shore of the Irish Sea with gourd-like fruits that fell into the water and became birds called Bernacles.^[7] He is referring to the legendary plant-animal, the barnacle tree, which was believed to drop its ripened fruit into the sea near the Orkney Islands. The ripened fruit would then release "[barnacle geese](#)" that would live in the water, growing to mature geese. The alleged existence of this fellow plant-animal was accepted as an explanation for migrating geese from the North.^[8]

In his work *The Shui-yang or Watersheep and The Agnus Scythicus or Vegetable Lamb* (1892), [Gustav Schlegel](#) points to Chinese legends of the "watersheep" as inspiration for the legend of the Vegetable Lamb of Tartary. Much like the vegetable lamb, the watersheep was believed to be both plant and animal and tales of its existence placed it near Persia. It was connected to the ground by a stem and, if the stem were severed, it would die. The animal was protected from aggressors by an enclosure built around it and by armored men yelling and beating drums. Its wool was also said to be used for fine clothing and headdresses.^[9] (In turn, the origin of watersheep is an explanation for [sea silk](#).)